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Secretary of State Marco Rubio with Margaret Brennan of CBS's Face the Nation

INTERVIEW

MARCO RUBIO, SECRETARY OF STATE
MIAMI, FLORIDA

MARCH 16, 2025

QUESTION: Let's get straight to it this morning with Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who joins us from Miami, Florida. Mr. Secretary, for our audience, just to explain, this Red Sea area is a really important transit point for global shipping. The Houthis out of Yemen have been disrupting transit there for some time. President Trump cited these concerns when he announced the strikes. I'm wondering, how long will this campaign last and will it involve ground forces?

SECRETARY RUBIO: Well, first of all, the problem here is that this is a very important shipping lane, and in the last year and a half, last 18 months, the Houthis have struck or attacked 174 naval vessels of the United States, attacking the U.S. Navy directly 174 times, and 145 times they've attacked commercial shipping. So we basically have a band of pirates with guided precision anti-ship weaponry, and exacting a toll system in one of the most important shipping lanes in the world. That's just not sustainable. We are not going to have these people controlling which ships can go through and which ones cannot. And so your question is how long will this go on. It will go on until they no longer have the capability to do that.

QUESTION: Well, what does U.S. intelligence tell us at this point? Because the U.S. had been conducting strikes for some time but has not stopped the Houthis.

SECRETARY RUBIO: No.

QUESTION: So what's going to be different right now? Do you have more fidelity in the intelligence that would make this more successful?

SECRETARY RUBIO: Well, those strikes were retaliation strikes. So they launched one missile, we hit the missile launcher, or we sent something to do it. This is not a message. This is not a one-off. This is an effort to deny them the ability to continue to constrict and control shipping, and it's just not going to happen. We're not going to have these guys, these people with weapons able to tell us where our ships can go – where the ships of all the world can go, by the way. It's not just the U.S. We're doing the world a favor.

QUESTION: Yeah.

SECRETARY RUBIO: We're doing the entire world a favor by getting rid of these guys and their ability to strike global shipping. That's the mission here, and it will continue until that's carried out. That never happened before. The Biden administration didn't do that. All the Biden administration would do is they would respond to an attack. These guys would launch one rocket; we'd hit the rocket launcher. That's it.

This is an effort to take away their ability to control global shipping in that part of the world. That's just not going to happen anymore.

QUESTION: And it could –

SECRETARY RUBIO: So this will continue until that's finished.

QUESTION: It could involve ground raids?

SECRETARY RUBIO: Well, I – those are military decisions to be made, but I've heard no talk of ground raids. I don't think there's a necessity for it right now. I can tell you that as of last night, some of the key people involved in those missile launches are no longer with us, and I can tell you that some of the facilities that they used are no longer existing, and that will continue.

Look, it's bottom line – easy way to understand it, okay? These guys are able to control what ships can go through there. They've attacked the U.S. Navy.

QUESTION: Yeah.

SECRETARY RUBIO: A hundred and seventy-four times they've attacked the United States Navy. We're not going to have people sitting around with the missiles, attacking the U.S. Navy. It's not going to happen – not under President Trump.

QUESTION: The President also referenced Iran in his statement. Iran provides some support for the Houthis, as you know. Put this in context for me, because U.S. intelligence has been suggesting for some time that Israel has the desire and intent to conduct an attack on Iran's developing nuclear program in the coming months. President Trump has extended an offer for negotiations. Have you heard anything back from Iran? Is this strike in Yemen a signal to Iran?

SECRETARY RUBIO: This strike in Yemen is about their ability – the ability of the Houthis – to strike global shipping and attack the U.S. Navy, and their willingness to do it: 174 times against the U.S. Navy; 145-some times against global shipping. That's what the strike is about. What we can't ignore, and the reason why the President mentioned Iran, is because the Iranians have supported the Houthis. They've provided them intelligence. They've provided them guidance. They've provided them weaponry. I mean, there's no way the Houthis – okay, the Houthis – would have the ability to do this kind of thing unless they had support from Iran. And so this was a message to Iran: Don't keep supporting them, because then you will also be responsible for what they are doing in attacking Navy ships and attacking global shipping.

QUESTION: They also get support from Russia, potentially, which you leveraged sanctions in regard to. But I want to ask you about tariffs because you were just in Canada this past week. China is Canada's second-biggest export market; Mexico's third. In this ongoing trade back-and-forth the U.S. is having, isn't there a risk that China will ultimately be the winner? If it's too costly to deal with the United States, won't they benefit?

SECRETARY RUBIO: Well, actually, China and Canada are involved in a mini trade war right now. In fact, the Chinese have imposed a bunch of tariffs, reciprocal or retaliatory tariffs, on Canada after Canada imposed tariffs on them. So here's the way everyone needs to understand this, okay? The President rightfully believes that the balance of global trade is completely off-kilter. For 30 or 40 years, we have allowed countries to treat us unfairly in global trade, much of it

during the Cold War because we wanted them to be rich and prosperous because they were our allies in the Cold War. But now that has to change. You look at the European Union. The European Union's economy is about the same size as ours. It's not a low-wage economy. It's very comparable to ours in terms of its composition and so forth. Why do they have a trade surplus with us?

So what the President is saying is two things. Number one, there are critical industries – like aluminum, like steel, like semiconductors, like automobile manufacturing – that he rightfully believes, President Trump rightfully believes, the U.S. needs to have a domestic capability, and the way you protect those industries and build that capability is by ensuring that there's economic incentives to produce in the United States.

The second is global, and that is, we are going to put tariffs on countries reciprocal to what they impose on us. And so this is global – it's not against Canada, it's not against Mexico, it's not against the EU; it's everybody. And then from that new baseline of fairness and reciprocity, we will engage, potentially, in bilateral negotiations with countries around the world on new trade arrangements that make sense for both sides – fairness. But right now it's not fair. We're going to reset the baseline and then we can enter into these bilateral agreements, potentially, with countries so that our trade is fair.

What's not going to continue is – of course these countries are upset.

QUESTION: So this is all just about leverage to get bilateral, not free – not North American free trade deals –

SECRETARY RUBIO: No, it's not leverage.

QUESTION: – renegotiation.

SECRETARY RUBIO: No, no, it's not leverage. It's fairness. It's resetting baseline fairness. And then from there we can work on deals and so forth, because they'll have products we don't make, we have products they don't make. That's where trade works the best. It has to be free, but it has to be fair in that – and right now it's only free on one side and it's not fair for the other side.

QUESTION: Well, you know, sir, that –

SECRETARY RUBIO: It's an unsustainable position.

QUESTION: – the ad hoc nature of these policy announcements and pullbacks are causing concern in the marketplace, as we saw this past week. So I heard you describe what seemed like a strategy to get to negotiations on a bilateral front. You also seemed to negotiate – say this was national security-minded. But then we also see –

SECRETARY RUBIO: Yeah.

QUESTION: – comments by the President of, like, 200 percent tariffs on champagne. That's not a critical industry for the United States. That seems more emotional.

SECRETARY RUBIO: No, that – I mean, that's called retaliation. That's what happens in these trade exchanges. They're going to increase tariffs on – they already have high tariffs. They're going to add more to their tariffs? Fine. Then we'll have to find something to – I mean, you tell me. I mean, Canada is going after whiskey and orange juice and, I mean –

QUESTION: In retaliation.

SECRETARY RUBIO: Right, exactly. So that sounds pretty petty to me as well. So what's the difference? The point is – I get it. I understand why these countries don't like it, because the status quo of trade is good for them. It benefits them. They like the status quo. We don't like the status quo. We are going to set a new status quo and then we can negotiate something, if they want to, that is fair for both sides. But what we have now cannot continue. We have deindustrialized this country, okay, deindustrialized the United States of America. There are things we can no longer make, and we have to be able to make in order to be safe as a country and in order to have jobs. That's why we had a Rust Belt. That's why we have suffered all these important jobs that once sustained entire communities, wiped out by trade that basically sent these factories, these jobs, this industrial capability to other places. That cannot and will not continue. I don't –

QUESTION: Yeah.

SECRETARY RUBIO: President Trump – this is no mystery; he's been talking about this since the 1980s, actually.

QUESTION: Yeah.

SECRETARY RUBIO: Even before he was a political figure. This is going to happen and it's going to happen now.

QUESTION: I want to ask you about Russia. You said Envoy Steve Witkoff's meeting with Vladimir Putin that happened last week would answer the fundamental question of whether we're moving towards a ceasefire or whether Putin is using a delay tactic. You spoke with Sergei Lavrov, the foreign minister, yesterday. Is this a delay tactic?

SECRETARY RUBIO: Well, I think it was a promising meeting. As I've said repeatedly, we're not going to negotiate this in the public. Hopefully we'll have something to announce at some point fairly soon. I can't guarantee that, but I certainly think the meeting was promising, the exchange was promising. I don't take away from Steve's meeting, from Ambassador Witkoff's meeting, negativity. There are some challenges. This is a complex, three-year war that's been ongoing along a very long military front with a lot of complexity to it.

So no one's claiming that it's easy, but I want everyone to understand here's the plan. Plan A is get the shooting to stop so that we can move to plan B, phase two, which is have everybody at a table, maybe not – maybe with some shuttle diplomacy, to figure out a way to permanently end this war in a way that's enduring and that respects everybody's needs and so forth. No one is saying that that second part is easy, but we can't get even to that second part until we get past the first part. It's hard to negotiate an enduring end to a war as long as they're shooting at each other, and so the President wants a ceasefire. That's what we're working on. Assuming we can get that done – that won't be easy in and of itself – we move to the second phase, which is negotiating something more enduring and permanent.

That will be hard. It will involve a lot of hard work, concessions from both sides, but it has to happen. This war cannot continue. The President has been clear about that, and he's doing everything he can to bring it to an end.

QUESTION: Okay. We'll talk about that later in the program as well with Envoy Witkoff. I want to ask you about a decision you made to revoke a student visa from someone at Columbia University this past week. The *Wall Street Journal* editorial board writes: "The... Administration needs to be careful... [it's] targeting real promoters of terrorism... not breaking the great promise of a green card by deporting anyone with controversial political views." Can you substantiate any form of material support for terrorism, specifically to Hamas –

SECRETARY RUBIO: Yes.

QUESTION: – from this Columbia student, or was it simply that he was espousing a controversial political point of view?

SECRETARY RUBIO: Well, not just the student – we’re going to do more. In fact, every day now we’re approving visa revocations, and, if that visa led to a green card, the green card process as well. And here’s why – it’s very simple. When you apply to enter the United States and you get a visa, you are a guest, and you’re coming as a student, you’re coming as a tourist, or what have you. And in it, you have to make certain assertions. And if you tell us when you apply for a visa, I’m coming to the U.S. to participate in pro-Hamas events, that runs counter to the foreign policy interests of the United States of America. It’s that simple. So you lied. You came – if you had told us that you were going to do that, we never would have given you the visa. Now you’re here, now you do it, so you lied to us. You’re out. It’s that simple; it’s that straightforward.

QUESTION: But is there any – but is there any evidence of a link to terrorism, or is it just his point of view?

SECRETARY RUBIO: Sure – yeah, they take over – I mean, do you not – I mean, you should watch the news. These guys take over entire buildings. They vandalize colleges; they shut down colleges.

QUESTION: We covered it intensely.

SECRETARY RUBIO: Well, then you should know that this is –

QUESTION: I’m asking about the specific justification for the revocation of his visa. Was there any evidence of material support for terrorism?

SECRETARY RUBIO: Well, this specific individual was the spokesperson, was the negotiator – negotiating on behalf of people that took over a campus, that vandalized buildings. Negotiating over what? That’s a crime in and of itself that they’re involved in being the negotiator or the spokesperson, this, that, the other. We don’t want – we don’t need these people in our country. We never should have allowed them in in the first place. If he had told us, I’m going over there and I’m going over there to become the spokesperson and one of the leaders of a movement that’s going to turn one of your allegedly elite colleges upside down, people can’t even go to school, the library – buildings being vandalized, we never would have let him in. We never would

have let him in to begin with. And now that he's doing it and he's here, he's going to leave and so are others, and we're going to keep doing it.

We are – and by the way, I find it ironic that a lot of these people out there defending the First Amendment speech – alleged free speech rights of these Hamas sympathizers –

QUESTION: Yes.

SECRETARY RUBIO: – they had no problem, okay, pressuring social media to censor American political speech. So I think it's ironic and hypocritical. But the bottom line is this: If you are in this country to promote Hamas, to promote terrorist organizations, to participate in vandalism, to participate –

QUESTION: Yeah.

SECRETARY RUBIO: – in acts of rebellion and riots on campus, we never would have let you in if we had known that, and now that we know it, you're going to leave.

QUESTION: Is it only pro-Palestinian people who are going to have their visas revoked, or other points of view as well?

SECRETARY RUBIO: No, I think anybody who's here in favor – look, we want to get rid of Tren de Aragua gang members. They're terrorists too. We – the President designated them, asked me to designate, and I did, as a terrorist organization. We want to get rid of them as well. You are – we don't want terrorists in America. I don't know how hard that is to understand. We want people – we don't want people in our country that are going to be committing crimes and undermining our national security or the public safety.

QUESTION: Yeah. Okay.

SECRETARY RUBIO: It's that simple. Especially people that are here as guests – that is what a visa is.

QUESTION: Yes.

SECRETARY RUBIO: I don't know when we've gotten it in our head that a visa is some sort of birthright. It is not. It is a visitor into our country, and if you violate the terms of your visitation, you are going to leave.

QUESTION: Yeah. Okay. Secretary Rubio, we'd like to have you back, talk to you about a lot more on your plate another time, but we have to leave it there.

SECRETARY RUBIO: Thank you.

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